

## **Interview with Lucy Meyer Transcript**

For the Diversifying the Bar: Lawyers Make History Project  
Law Society of Upper Canada

Interviewee: Lucy Meyer [LM], widow of lawyer Willem Meyer

Interviewer: Allison Kirk-Montgomery [AKM]

Interview Date: 5 October 2010

Location: Victoria, B.C.

Transcribed by A. Kirk-Montgomery and S. Webster, November 2010

*[Transcript reviewed by Lucy Meyer.]*

AKM: Today is the 5<sup>th</sup> of October, 2010 and my name is Allison Kirk-Montgomery. I'm the project manager of the *Diversifying the Bar, Lawyers Make History* project for the Law Society of Upper Canada. I am in Victoria, B.C. in the home of Lucy Meyer, the widow of Willem Meyer. Willem Meyer is one of the lawyers of Dutch ancestry profiled on the Law Society's website. I'm here today to learn more about his life and career. Sadly, Willem passed away in March of this year so I'm meeting, with great thanks to Lucy, so thank you very much for inviting me today, Lucy. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and how you met Willem?

LM: What can I tell you? I met Willem because he was a lawyer and I was in the travel business and I needed legal advice. Actually, it was a mortgage, a second

*Lucy Meyer interview by Allison Kirk-Montgomery  
The Law Society of Upper Canada Diversifying the Bar: Lawyers Make History Project*

mortgage that I had and it was in default. I knew Willem was a Dutch lawyer and I thought, "Well, I'll give him a call and see if he could get my three thousand dollars back." This was in 1965 so three thousand was a lot of money in those days. I had been to previous lawyers in town and they had said, "Forget about it," they said, "You know the taxes, other people that come before you and you get all kinds of other people - write off the \$3,000.00," and I wasn't about to do that. So, I called Willem and told him how I was and that I had this problem and he looked after it. I got my three thousand dollars. He went to court for me, I don't know how he did it but he got my \$3,000.00 back. So, I was very impressed and then he asked me for a date. [Laughter] And, so I was going skiing at Aspen that weekend and so I said, "Well, maybe you'll call me when I get back," and I thought to myself, "I'll probably never hear from him again." Then he called and we had our first date, and our second date and then he moved in with me and that was it. [Laughter]

AKM: And that was the mid 70's?

LM:'76.

AKM: And then you married a year later...

LM:And then we married in 1977.

AKM: That's good. That was a very good introduction, wasn't it?

LM:[Laughter]

AKM: And you're Dutch, of course.

LM: I'm Dutch.

AKM: And when did you come to Canada?

LM: I arrived in 1957, May 1957.

*Lucy Meyer interview by Allison Kirk-Montgomery  
The Law Society of Upper Canada Diversifying the Bar: Lawyers Make History Project*

AKM: Good. Yes. So, do you remember how it was that you knew he was a Dutch lawyer?

LM: Well, I belonged to all kinds of Dutch organizations. So I belonged to the Netherlands Luncheon Club and everybody in the Dutch community, they knew Willem quite well. He was very involved in the DUCA Credit Union, which is the Dutch Canadian Credit Union. He was one of the original people that put it together. And every Dutch person had an account at the DUCA Credit Union in those days so we met on different occasions but we never really got involved until much later.

AKM: Was the Dutch community a close community do you think?

LM: Yes, but I think less close, for instance, than the Italians or the Greeks certainly. I think they diversify quickly or melt into - they don't live in the same area necessarily as the Greeks and the Italians. We move on and try to make friends as well in the Canadian community. Although, if you're in business as I was, and Willem, your first people that you want to sell to or provide service to is the people that you know which of course is the people with the Dutch background

AKM: And you did that in the travel business?

LM: And I did that in the travel business. But then I noticed that after two or three years, the Dutch people are getting older and that they're not going to go to Holland all the time so you have to diversify. So then I quickly changed my whole theme and became very much involved in commercial travel, big companies, for instance and I did that and the holiday travel actually became secondary.

AKM: Hmm.

LM: And so my commercial travel was what really made the business and the

*Lucy Meyer interview by Allison Kirk-Montgomery  
The Law Society of Upper Canada Diversifying the Bar: Lawyers Make History Project*

holiday travel was just gravy.

AKM: Yes. So was that a similar process to what Willem experienced in his practice?

LM: He started out with Dutch as well and then of course he realized that a lot of Italians were in the community and they didn't have a lawyer because that generation didn't produce any lawyers yet until the next generation. So then he went to school and learned to speak Italian so that he could cater to the Italian community. And of course he spoke already French and German. His French was not really very useful but German was and of course, Dutch.

AKM: And English.

LM: And English, yes.

AKM: And where did he learn all these languages?

LM: In high school. He went to "gymnasium," as they call it in Holland. They had gymnasium "A" and "B." "A" is mainly just languages and if you have "B" you have languages and all the sciences as well. So it's basically a BA actually when you finish after 6 years, that's really what it is in Holland. And then he went to university for a year, took psychology, but he didn't like that and then he decided to come to Canada.

AKM: Why did he decide to come to Canada?

LM: Yeah, that's another story. His father was a minister, a Dutch Reform minister and he had six children. You had one chance to make it at university because there were 6 other children. So, if you didn't make your first year then you were on your own. So then you would have to find your own way. His older sister has a law degree, one of his brothers has a law degree.

AKM: Ah.

LM: His oldest brother, who died since then, has a law and a medical degree and then he went into Slavic languages and became a professor of Russian at the University of Utrecht. So the languages were all in his family, very much, and also the law.

AKM: Higher education. Law. Interesting. But, because he missed that chance, he decided, greener fields...

LM: Right. Now, I'm sure that if he persuaded his father that he would have but he had decided that he'd had enough and then he came here. He actually had a job provided by his brother-in-law, the one that is married to his older sister, who was in the Foreign Service who and became an ambassador later on. But at that time he was still in the Foreign Service and was able to get him a job in Toronto for a company. So, he worked in the factory that his brother-in-law recommended and he worked there for two years.

AKM: But, he didn't like it.

LM: He didn't like it at all. And then he decided that he had to do something else. He looked at all his options. Then he thought that law was the easiest to obtain.  
[Laughter.]

AKM: Because of his education.

LM: Because of his education.

AKM: What did he have to do to become a lawyer in those days? I think it was easier then than now.

LM: Yes, easier then, yes, than now but I don't know because I wasn't around

at that time. All I know is that it was the last year, '52, that you could work and take classes at the same time.

AKM: And that's when he started?

LM: That's when he started, 1952. And he graduated in 1958. He had to work mainly because he had a wife and a child, but he got all kinds of grants, he never had to pay for any of his education...

AKM: Because of his scholarships?

LM: He got scholarships. He got all sorts of scholarships. Of course, he was an immigrant, that helped. I think the Ford company gave him a scholarship, and the Dutch Society or the maybe Dutch Consulate gave him a scholarship. Of course, his grades were always up there. I mean, I think he did two hours of work everyday. I think he was a clever man. It was very easy for him to do that.

AKM: Did he like school? Learning?

LM: Yeah, I think learning. Yeah, yeah. He did.

AKM: He mentioned, in his little biography that he did for the Diversifying the Bar Project that, thanks to the help of Dean Smalley Baker, [dean of Osgoode Hall Law School] at the time, he was able to get an articling position at the time but he'd had difficulty despite his good grades. Can you tell me a bit about that?

LM: I don't know really because I wasn't there at that time. I can only remember that he had a problem spelling and I told him that you don't spell, ah, I forgot the word now, what it was. No, I don't think he had a problem, not that I know of. Did he tell you that he had a problem?

AKM: Getting that first articling position.

*Lucy Meyer interview by Allison Kirk-Montgomery  
The Law Society of Upper Canada Diversifying the Bar: Lawyers Make History Project*

LM: Oh, getting that first articling position, yes.

AKM: Yes.

LM: I don't know how he got that actually.

AKM: Through the Dean apparently.

LM: Oh, I see.

AKM: But I just wondered if you knew how it is...

LM: No.

AKM: Probably because his scholarship was good.

LM: Yeah. Probably.

AKM: He, having a wife and children and jobs must have set him apart from the other students.

LM: Yeah. He only had one child though. The second one was born the year he graduated.

AKM: OK..

LM: In '58. So he just had the oldest one right away. They lived with another lawyer and his wife was a lawyer and they had a child the same age.

AKM: Really?

LM: So they moved in together and then Willem's first wife looked after the two girls.

AKM: I see.

LM: But that only lasted about a year, I think, and it didn't work out too well. But, they did that for awhile and then he started going on his own and had all these jobs. He was a night manager for instance for, I think 2 years, at a hotel in

Toronto. He started at 12 o'clock at night and worked until eight o'clock when the next shift came in and then he took a few classes and then he had to do some more work or sleep a couple of hours. And then he was also an usher in a theatre and he worked as a bar, in a pub, in a place where people could only drink beer, I forget how these places are called now.

AKM: You mean without a liquor... a beer parlour?

LM: Yes, in a beer parlour. So he would do that until he went to the night manager job.

AKM: Working, all the time being at school, doing articling...

LM: That's right, yes..

AKM: He articled with a firm called Kimber and Dubin, I don't...

LM: Yes, it was [Charles] Dubin, he is famous, he just died.

AKM: Exactly. Do you remember what he told you about that experience?

LM: Well, he enjoyed that and he admired the man very much. He did stay in touch with him all these years.

AKM: Did he?

LM: Yes..

AKM: He said in that little 150 words [his biography posted on the web pages of the Diversifying the Bar: Lawyers Make History project, appended] (I don't have it in front of me), that he learned a lot about the practicalities of the law and the language. So, I guess he meant the actual legal lexicon.

LM: Yeah, right.

AKM: That is interesting. What was his practice like at the beginning, as far as

you remember him telling you?

LM: Well, he was just by himself but not for very long. I think that after two years he had Mr. Wassenaar come in, he was just finished law.

AKM: This is Sy Wassenaar?

LM: Yes, Sy Wassenaar. And then a year later, I think it was even less than a year later, the other fellow, but I can't think of his name, he came. So, there were three of them for a long time. And then the third one decided to do his own practice because he wanted to do litigation only, so he moved on. And then, in my time, he got Marty Banach, the fourth - well, he became the third partner actually.

AKM: Hmm..

LM: And then they had three or four lawyers, but as associates, but not partners. The three stayed partners and they had three or four associates.

AKM: So this would be the early 60's is when he would have.

LM: Ah, it would..

AKM: He was called to the bar in '58.

LM: In '58. He started right away. The same year in '58.

AKM: Right.

LM: He graduated in May.

AKM: And Sy Wassenaar was a Dutch person. Was he an immigrant?

LM: No, his parents were immigrants to Michigan, in the States. So most of his family still live in the States but he moved here. Because they were both Christian Reformed and they have this Christian College in Michigan and they have this...

AKM: Yes.

*Lucy Meyer interview by Allison Kirk-Montgomery  
The Law Society of Upper Canada Diversifying the Bar: Lawyers Make History Project*

LM: And the other chap as well.

AKM: And, this was in North York was it? Where was his office?

LM: The last office was in North York, at Yonge and Sheppard. But he started out...I can't think of the name of the street anymore. It was above a liquor store. A tiny little [place].

AKM: Downtown?

LM: No, no. Oh gosh, It's been too long. I've been away too long and I can't remember the name of the street now. Anyway, it was in a working class area above a liquor store. That was where he started out with Mary, his secretary and she outlasted him. She was still there when he retired.

AKM: Really?

LM: Yes.

AKM: So it sounds like he had a good group and he kept that group.

LM: He kept them. All his staff, most of his staff are still there.

AKM: Really.

LM: He's got two or three girls that are still there when he started. Mary is the one who started but Liz and the other girls, they were all there before I got to know them. That's 40 years!

AKM: Were they of Dutch...

LM: No, no.

AKM: So, at the very beginning, it was two lawyers of Dutch heritage and with a lot of Dutch clients.

LM: Right.

AKM: What kind of practice did he do for his clients?

LM: Willem was mainly real estate and estates, and divorce. But he never did any, no, he didn't do any [court] work.

AKM: No litigation?

LM: No.

AKM: Not interested?

LM: No. Marty did that. That's why he hired Marty, was to do that.

AKM: That's very interesting. So, that's the 60's. One of the things he said was that he had a humdrum practice. But you were saying that he was typically self-deprecating.

LM: He was always, he always played himself down for some reason. It's probably some inferiority complex he had. I could never...If people asked him, "What do you do?" "Oh, I did some lawyering," he would say. [Laughter.] Always like that. And people were so amazed when they came to his office and saw this whole practice with all these lawyers there and he would never, never... I don't know why that was.

AKM: But did he enjoy being a lawyer?

LM: Yeah, he did. He did.

AKM: What do you think he liked about it?

LM: Being his own boss, for one. He enjoyed that very much and he was very people-oriented in that particular group. He was not a high achiever, in as far as meeting sophisticated other people. He was not really very interested in that.

AKM: Um hmm. You mentioned that he had a lot of connections in the Dutch

Canadian community.

LM: Yeah, he did.

AKM: Did he belong to a lot of organizations as well?

LM: No, no, he didn't. The only one he started out with was CNBPA. The Canadian Network Business and Professional Association. He started that with two people.

AKM: Ah.

LM: And the second generation is running it now. Sy Wassenaar's daughter was the president last year.

AKM: That's very interesting, the connections.

LM: There's a whole new generation in there now that still do very well. And he belonged to the Netherlands Lunch Club, yeah the Netherlands Luncheon Club, just to keep some contacts there.

AKM: What about friendships?

LM: No. He, as soon as he was finished "lawyering" as he called it, he cut off all the Dutch connections.

AKM: Interesting.

LM: Yes.

AKM: Except you.

LM: Yeah. Ys, that's right. [Laughter] But it was interesting. He didn't want any part of it anymore. Of course, he was very much involved in the DUCA Credit Union because he was one of the original people that started it. That's not true; he was the first lawyer that they hired and he became, he stayed there for years and years and

*Lucy Meyer interview by Allison Kirk-Montgomery  
The Law Society of Upper Canada Diversifying the Bar: Lawyers Make History Project*

years.

AKM: Really.

LM: And that was a big, big credit union.

AKM: So, through the 60's and then I understand that he and his first wife divorced?

LM: They were divorced.

AKM: And you met in the 70's?

LM: '76, yeah.

AKM: So, then you became a lawyer's wife?

LM: A lawyers wife, yes.

AKM: So, what was that like? What did that mean to be a lawyer's wife as opposed to being a woman with her own travel agency?

LM: It didn't mean anything, because I had my own business it really wasn't that important. Except that we both had careers which, of course, made it nice. But to be a lawyer's wife was not really all that important because he wasn't all that interested in

meeting or going out, anyways, because he had his groups of friends and that's how it stayed.

AKM: His practice was established.

LM: That's right.

AKM: You didn't need to entertain for business?

LM: No, no. And he never did. Willem never took work home, for instance. I've never seen him carrying a briefcase. He worked in the office, he left the office and

*Lucy Meyer interview by Allison Kirk-Montgomery  
The Law Society of Upper Canada Diversifying the Bar: Lawyers Make History Project*

that was it. Never took anything home. Never worked late hours.

AKM: What did he think about modern practises in law?

LM: Well, he has a son-in-law that works like crazy. Well, not anymore now, but I guess now again. His youngest daughter married a lawyer from England and he worked for a big law firm in London with 250 lawyers and the guy was working seven days a week, until midnight, every night and weekends. Now he [Willem] could never understand things like that. He would say, "You have a family, you have a child you know. Get out of this rat race." So he [son-in-law] did. Then he found a job in Jersey and Guernsey in the Channel Isles. They went out there and had a look at it to see what it was like and they liked Guernsey. So now he works from nine to four or five in the afternoon and they have a family and they have a family life. So that's what...

AKM: So he was a good example?

LM: Yes, that's right.

AKM: So, now what about your contact with his office and his partners and associates?

LM: Fine. I still have contact with them because we have investments together and on a monthly basis I talk to the office.

AKM: Christmas parties and things like that?

LM: No, I don't, because I'm here but we used to go to Christmas parties. Oh yeah, it was all very friendly. Yes.

AKM: And technology, the internet, the coming of the computer has changed travel agencies and law. How did Willem feel about changing technology?

*Lucy Meyer interview by Allison Kirk-Montgomery  
The Law Society of Upper Canada Diversifying the Bar: Lawyers Make History Project*

LM: Well, he had no problem with it because he never used them anyway.

[Laughter]. He had staff.

AKM: Mary!

LM: He had Mary and he had a whole slew of other girls that did all the stuff.

Now, I don't think he ever used a computer. I don't think he ever learned how to use it when he was still working. He learned it when we retired and bought a laptop, so that was it. He saw clients and he talked into his little thing.

AKM: And dictated and so forth.

LM: Yeah.

AKM: How did you see his practice changing from 1975 to, approximately, would he have retired about the year 2000 maybe? Maybe ten years ago?

LM: Yeah. But anyway, over 25 years.

LM: Ah, well it got larger, it got more associates but he was still the top guy. I mean, they would always come to him. He did the hiring and the firing and Willem was always in charge. So that never changed up until he retired. When he sold his part of the practice, they had a working arrangement of what the thing was worth and he sold his part to a new [person], a woman actually, so it all worked out very well.

AKM: And you kept in your own business until?

LM: Until '88.

AKM: He got a QC, when was that, do you know?

LM: That's when we were already in Burlington. We got together in 1976, so probably 1980.

AKM: How did he feel about that?

*Lucy Meyer interview by Allison Kirk-Montgomery  
The Law Society of Upper Canada Diversifying the Bar: Lawyers Make History Project*

LM: Well, he was totally surprised for one. Well, he knew George Kerr so maybe that was the influence. I don't know how it came about. But you know, the QC, he always said that as long as you keep your nose clean for 12 years, you know, everybody gets a QC in the end. [Laughter] So, that was his rationale for the whole thing.

AKM: That's interesting. Um, let me see. So, he had four children.

LM: Right.

AKM: When you met him. And so I imagine a lot of your life was related to raising those two because they were fairly young.

LM: I didn't really raise them because they still had a mother. I just saw them in the summer for two months and then Christmas and Easter and we took them on holidays. But the majority of the time they were with their mother and their step-father in Vancouver.

AKM: So, you mention that one son-in-law was a lawyer. The other children, what are their professions or their occupations?

LM: Well, the oldest is a VP with the National Bank.

AKM: Is that Lilly?

LM: That's Lilly, yes. Viviane is principal of an alternate school in Toronto. She has all these kids with the nose rings and so on. And she has been there for many years. Then Tom is a landscape designer in Vancouver who has his own thing. And then Christine became a journalist, from Ottawa University, I think.

AKM: From Carleton?

LM: Carleton University. Right. She did not work very long in

that field. First of all after university she decided to travel for a year and then she met a young fellow from England who had just finished his law degree. And then they went back and forth. She didn't know if she was going to live there or not there and could not live here because he couldn't practice law here. So, she finally went to England and she got a job for the Commonwealth office and published the newsletter for the Commonwealth. So she did that for a couple of years and then she got children and they moved to Guernsey and she does a bit of freelancing and she does reflexology, she's really into that.

AKM: So no lawyers in the immediate family?

LM: No. Only the son-in-law.

AKM: And how did Willem feel about that?

LM: Oh, he was fine with that. He never forced anybody. The only one - he kind of was hoping that Tommy would do better but the girls, all three girls are very clever and it was an uphill battle for him. It was just awful. He said he didn't know what he wanted to do. [Willem] sent him to Australia for a year. He said, "Just see what it's like to be an immigrant," so he gave him a one-way ticket to Australia. "Stay away for a year," he said, "and when you come back you'll probably know what you want to do." So, but he came back after nine months so we let him come back. [Laughter.] Nine months. And then he starting working in a flower shop, in the nursery business, and I think that's where he got the idea that that's maybe what he should be doing. So, that was a very good lesson for him.

AKM: Yes, absolutely. Sounds like a good father.

LM: Yeah. Yeah.

AKM: Did you socialize together with other lawyers and their wives?

LM: No.

AKM: Not at all?

LM: No.

AKM: And mostly your friends were, who?

LM: Mostly the friends were my friends. Because he had very few friends. He didn't really need any friends. His, his life was just me. And his children were his main... We had some friends that we played tennis with but really close friends. He had one close friend and he decided after being here 40 years or so, decided to go back to Holland. And, he [Willem] really got ticked off about that. He thought, "Well how can you do that?" You know, I think he felt a bit deserted, actually. So he left and he broke contact with him right away. That was the end of that. He had another good friend, he just passed away, he was a doctor. He was a good friend of Willem, and his wife. His wife was just here, so that's a couple that we did a lot of things with, who happens to be his family doctor. He just passed away in December. So that's actually the only couple that we really did a lot of things with.

AKM: Do you think he always felt like an emigrant? Or an immigrant, I should say.

LM: No, I don't think so. I think he needed very few people. You know, he was not interested in becoming bigger or well known. He liked what he was doing, he was very satisfied with that. I think his first wife, I really should not talk about his first

wife because it's not a very... She was a bit of a striver if you know what a striver means? She always wanted to meet people here, meet these people and that people, the more educated, the more well known, the more Rosedale, the better and he felt very uncomfortable with that. I think that was one of the reasons they broke up, actually. She was never satisfied with the way it was. It always had to be a bigger house, a bigger this, bigger.... And I think that this just was not him.

AKM: But he was satisfied with his career in law?

LM: Yes, he was. Very much. He enjoyed it, very much, and he enjoyed the people he worked with and he was very good to them. Always. A lot of them are still there.

AKM: And the firm still has his name.

LM: Still has him name - Meyer Wassenaar and Banach. I just called a couple of days ago and it's still there. I don't know what's going to happen with Marty because I think (he's the third one) and I think he's going to retire pretty soon so I don't know what's going to happen then. But it's such a well known firm now and it's so big now.

AKM: Well, more than 50 years.

LM: Yes, that's right.

AKM: And, speaking of names. You say that he changed his name a little bit when he came to Canada, did he?

LM: Yeah. From M-e-i-j [Meijer] er he made it into Y [Meyer] but most Dutch people did that because there is no Y in our language, so it was awkward.

AKM: For people to say it to or to understand.

LM: Yeah, yeah. Meijer. You had to spell it all the time. Mind you, he still had to spell it because some of them are a-i [Maier], you know.

AKM: He did say, and we mentioned Sy Wassenaar, "I was able to attract good partners which broadened the practice considerably."

LM: Yes.

AKM: So, broadening was in what sense would you say?

LM: Actually, not so much Sy Wassenaar but Marty Banach. Because he was Jewish and he told me we got a lot of Jewish clients. And the new lawyers that came into the firm as associates were all Jewish. So, now the whole practice is practically Jewish. And, of course, the Meyer name is also very Jewish. They had Meyer, Meyer, you know. And it also worked to his benefit of course.

AKM: That's interesting.

LM: Yes.

AKM: And, I think you mentioned when we were speaking earlier that he began his practice with individuals like Italians. He learned Italian in order to meet the needs of an Italian clientele. But then he moved into construction?

LM: Well, the Italians...Once you start having a few Italian clients, they tell somebody else, and now some of these labourers all of a sudden became contractors and they started building houses and became bigger and so they recommended Willem. So that's how we got a lot of business from the Italians then. That's how it worked.

AKM: And then did the Italian clientele sort of move on as young Italians became lawyers?

LM: Yeah, they moved on but Willem never had that problem because he retired before that was really happening.

*Lucy Meyer interview by Allison Kirk-Montgomery  
The Law Society of Upper Canada Diversifying the Bar: Lawyers Make History Project*

AKM: True, that's right. That's a very recent thing. He mentioned about the clannishness of the profession. What do you think he was referring to?

LM: Yes. Well, in his year particularly, I think, there was a lot of Upper Canada lawyers in there. Oh, it was so stupid, I should say and they had their own little clique. But then of course, they didn't have to work, and so they could socialize and they could go and have a pub night and Willem, of course, was never able to do that because he had to work. And he was not the only one because I remember meeting a lawyer, also an immigrant lawyer, who lived in London. We happened to run into him and he had the same problem. I think he was from Portugal?

AKM: Oh really, do you remember his name at all?

LM: No. But he had the same problem because he also had to work and he was also an immigrant and he never really fit in with the other group. So he found that very bothersome.

AKM: And we mentioned earlier about independence being a very strong goal of his.

LM: Yes.

AKM: And he felt that the law allowed him to be independent.

LM: Yes.

AKM: So it was a good choice of career?

LM: It was. Yes, yes. It was just excellent for him.

AKM: And is there any other things that you would like to tell me about his career or something that you think he might like to pass on?

LM: Well, he would have mentioned it to you, I would think. Because I don't really

know anything else. Because I've only known him the last thirty years.

AKM: That's a good long time.

LM: Yes, thirty or forty years. No, all I can say is that he was a happy man, he enjoyed what he was doing. He never had any regrets that he came here. He always enjoyed that. He enjoyed the last four years here in Victoria. So there's not much I can tell you, except that he was a happy man. And he would never have changed anything in his life. He would not have changed his first marriage either because he had the four children, you know?

AKM: Yes, and I'm sure he wouldn't have changed his second marriage either because he was very happy.

LM: No.

AKM: Well, that's wonderful. I really appreciate you adding these things, and they are going to be part of the Diversifying the Bar project so people in fifty years who have forgotten what it was like will be able to read about Willem. I will send you the link when it goes online.

LM: That's lovely.

AKM: Thank you very much, Lucy. It's been wonderful to meet you.

LM: You are welcome.

--end of transcript —

[see next page]

■ Diversifying the bar: lawyers make history

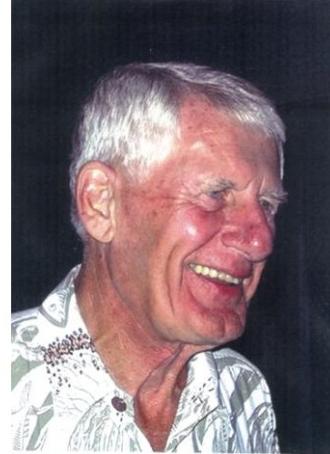
---

Name: **MEYER, Willem John Bernard**

Male

Born 1931 in Holland

Died 2010



Called to the Bar:

1958

Q.C.

Name of Heritage or Community:

Dutch

**Biographical Information:**

According to Willem Meyer, his law career was more a tale of survival than importance. In 1950, he arrived in Canada from Holland with only a guitar and fifty dollars. He managed to enter Osgoode Law School aided by Dean Smalley Baker. His first articles were with Kimber and Dubin, who taught him the language and the craft of lawyering. In his practice, he served Dutch clients but soon learned Italian to serve the immigrants arriving in Toronto. He was able to attract good partners which broadened the practice considerably. The firm, long after his retirement, still uses his name, which pleased him. A few months before his death, he wrote, "I loved the law but was often struck by the profession's clannishness. My real aim in life was to be independent and never to have a person with authority above me. This plan I was lucky to achieve."

Nominated by Marten A. Mol, Canadian Netherlands Business and Professional Association.

*Lucy Meyer interview by Allison Kirk-Montgomery  
The Law Society of Upper Canada Diversifying the Bar: Lawyers Make History Project*